

**AGENCY:**

Denali Commission

**ACTION:**

Notice of Availability

**NOTICE:**

Pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations Parts 1500-1508), the Denali Commission announces the availability of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for proposed Infrastructure Development at Mertarvik, Alaska.

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**SUMMARY INFORMATION:**

1. Proposed Action: The Final EIS was prepared to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed construction of infrastructure at Mertarvik in accordance with the community layout plan chosen by the residents of Newtok. The purpose of the Mertarvik Infrastructure Development project is to provide the people of Newtok with a place to live that allows them to maintain their community and way of life within their traditional lands, while creating the necessary infrastructure for a safe, stable, and healthy existence.

2. Alternatives: Three community layout plans (CLP) for infrastructure development at Mertarvik were evaluated along with a no-action alternative. The constant factor in all these alternatives, including the no action alternative, is the threat to Newtok from erosion and flooding, and the inevitable destruction of the current village site. Given that engineered solutions to control or moderate the erosion have been abandoned as impractical, there is no alternative that preserves a status quo at Newtok. The

alternatives discussed in this FEIS are all responses that have been proposed to an ongoing, unstoppable catastrophe for the community of Newtok.

This project has been shaped and constrained by a series of events, studies, and decisions occurring over at least four decades. The FEIS describes a number of alternatives in a historical context for the purpose of illustrating how the long-term evolution of the project led to the community's selection of a new village site to be constructed on Nelson Island, and Alternative 2 of the three community layout plans, as the preferred alternative.

The preferred CLP includes a replacement airport, a school, landfill, homes, powerplant, bulk fuel storage facility, water treatment plant, washeteria, and other infrastructure necessary to develop a sustainable community. It is anticipated that a phased approach will be used to construct the new community over the next several years using a combination of Federal and other funding. Some infrastructure has already been constructed at the site: barge landing, access road, evacuation center foundation, and some pioneer homes.

3. Coordination: The Denali Commission has consulted with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service to comply with the Endangered Species Act. The Denali Commission, or the agencies responsible for constructing specific elements of the infrastructure (e.g. the Federal Aviation Administration for the airport), will consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer as required as infrastructure at Mertarvik gets closer to development. If necessary, the Denali Commission, or agencies responsible for constructing specific elements of the infrastructure, will apply for Department of the Army Permits issued under authority of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act or Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act, and thereby subject to additional NEPA review.

4. Availability of the Final EIS: Copies of the FEIS can be viewed or downloaded from the project website at <https://www.denali.gov/publications>. Regulations provide for a 30-day waiting period after the Final EIS is published before the agency may take final action. During that period, in addition to the Denali Commission's own internal review, agencies and the public can comment on the Final EIS. Following this 30-day waiting period, the Denali Commission will announce its Record of Decision (ROD) which will be published in the Federal Register and local newspapers. Comments on the FEIS may be submitted via e-mail until midnight, April 9, 2018. Comments submitted by regular mail must be postmarked no later than April 2, 2018 to ensure they become part of the official project record.

Dated: March 1, 2018

(for)  
  
Joel Neimeyer  
Denali Commission Federal Co-Chair